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The laws of imperial China provided heavy punishments for violations of these norms; the most heinous crimes were those against hsiao, filial submission. Yet the ideal in the application of law was not blindfold justice but punishment administered with due regard for "human feelings" [jen-ching] and for the specific circumstances sourrounding the crime. This attitude is illustrated in the old proverb: "There is one thing worse than a dishonest official and that is an honest official," which expresses disapproval of a rigorous enforcement of rules and regulations, of an enforcement that fails to take in account "human feelings."[5] The criteria for judging behavior as good or bad were therefore neither religious nor legalistic, but were the prevailing norms in the community, the customary practices sanctioned by tradition and ratified by a high degree of community consensus.

In traditional China goodness could be cultivated through practice, study, and contemplation. Confucianism held that the path to goodness was open to all, that those who attained a high order of goodness should be a moral elite, a group of exemplars for others. This moral elite was also, in Confucian theory, the group which should hold and exercise political power and enjoy the rewards of status and wealth. This notion sanctioned the long political dominance of the scholar-official.

5. Ruth Benzel and John Weakland, "An Anthropological Approach to Chinese Communism," Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures, New York, 1952, pp. 80-81. Hereafter cited as Bunzel-Weakland.

6. Liu Shao-ch'i, "The Training of the Communist Party Member," first presented as a speech in 1939; cf. translation in Boyd Compton, Mao's China, Seattle, 1952, p. 146.

this secret society spreads gradually to other regions of China. In 1954, the Wuhan, Huang-p'i, Hsiao-kan, P;u-ch'i, and Hsien-ning areas in Hupeh Province were the centers of I Kuan Tao activities.[24] Among the conditions of existence advocated by this group are "anticipation of world disaster," and "avoidance of action." Although this doctrine seems to be no more than passive resistance to Communist indoctrination, the society has been accused of having aided the Japanese during World War II and presently working for the Kuomintang against the Communist regime. The exact strength of these secret socieities is not known, but it is understandable that in view of the Communist violence, the theme of passive resistance as advocated by the I Kuan Tao must have a great appeal to the troubled populace in Central-South China.

Vagrants, habitual thieves, and gangsters are also slated for elimination by the Communist regime because they contribute to unrest and are therefore potential counterrevolutionaries. No specific statistics have bee compiled by the Communists on these "dregs of society," but reports on the "Reform-through-labor" program have indications as to the approximate strength of these groups. (See chapter on Forced Labor.) In announcing their success in dealing with the undesirable elements, the Communists have indluced arson and sabotage among the crimes committed by these undesirable groups.

II. CORRUPTION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES DETRIMENTAL TO THE REGIME

As early as 1950, the Communists in China were

24. Shih Ch'eng-chih, loc. cit.